

Quick Guide

A Stronger, Calmer You

Simple skills to help you keep your cool
and protect your peace



**Grounded in clinical knowledge,
tailored for real people.**

This resource was reviewed by Gillian C. Galen, PsyD, a licensed clinical psychologist and nationally recognized expert in Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). Her feedback helped ensure this content is both accurate and empowering for real-life use.

Why This Guide Matters

Life can feel overwhelming — emotions run high, stress piles up, and shame can take over the story we tell ourselves. This guide is built on practices that help people manage intense feelings and build a life worth living. They come from an approach therapists use called Dialectical Behavioral Therapy or DBT. Originally developed for people dealing with suicidal thoughts or intense emotional swings, it's now used around the world to support everything from anxiety and depression, to trauma recovery and stress management. These are practical tools anyone can try to help you reset, stop shame from running the show, and build a stronger foundation for the life you want to live.

Disclaimer: Your health is unique, and the information in this guide is for educational purposes only and is not a substitute for personal medical advice. Consult with a healthcare provider or registered dietitian to create a plan that is right for your specific health needs and



You're Not Broken— Building a Foundation

Replace self-judgment with self-compassion



You Good?

Ever feel like you're spiraling or sabotaging yourself? Here's the truth: you're not broken. **You're human. And you're learning.**

Real Talk



Accountability doesn't require shame. You can hold yourself responsible and still believe in your own worth. That powerful idea sits at the core of what mental health experts call

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). Good news – you don't need the jargon or a textbook to use the practices. These are simple tools anyone can try to quiet the inner critic and build better self-talk.

7 Beliefs That Change the Story in Your Head

Swap shame for self-compassion with these foundations:

1	You're doing the best you can.	Survival counts. Effort matters.
2	You want to improve.	The desire for better is proof of hope.
3	You can try again, harder, differently.	Growth is built on persistence.
4	You may not have caused all your problems — but you can work on solving them.	Power starts with choice.
5	New behaviors create new outcomes.	Every skill you learn is a tool for resilience.
6	You can't fail when you practice better self-talk.	Each attempt is progress, not proof of failure.
7	You need support, not judgment.	Asking for help makes you human, not weak.

Try This: Reframe Your Inner Dialogue

The next time you catch yourself in harsh self-talk, try these swaps:

1	"I always mess things up."	"I'm doing the best I can — and I can try new ways."
2	"I shouldn't need help."	"Everyone needs support sometimes. It makes me human."
3	"I'm too far gone to change."	"I can start small today — and every step counts."

Real Life Results

- Practicing these reframes helps you:
- + Respond to emotions without spiraling.
 - + Stop shame from running the show.
 - + Build compassion and trust in yourself.

Your Feelings Make Sense

Validate emotions instead of shutting them down



You Good?

Ever told yourself to “just get over it,” and then end up feeling worse? Here’s the truth: **your emotions always make sense in context.**

Real Talk



When emotions feel “too much,” many of us respond by shutting them down, judging ourselves, or brushing them off. But ignoring feelings doesn’t make them disappear — it makes them louder.

Validation is the skill of saying: **“My feelings make sense, even if I don’t like them.”** Self-validation is learning to do this for yourself without waiting for someone else to approve or agree.

3 Steps to Make Your Feelings Make Sense

Next time your emotions spike, try this quick formula:

1	Name the emotion.	“I feel anxious / sad / angry / disconnected.”
2	Connect it to a context.	“It makes sense because I haven’t slept / I had a tough conversation / I’m under pressure.”
3	Offer yourself compassion.	“Anyone in my situation might feel this way. It’s okay to feel it before I decide what to do.”

Try This: Reframe Your Inner Dialogue

The next time you catch yourself in harsh self-talk, try these swaps:

1	“I shouldn’t feel this way.”	“Given everything I’m dealing with, it makes sense I’m overwhelmed.”
2	“I’m being dramatic.”	“This situation really hurt me — and my feelings are valid.”
3	“I just need to suck it up.”	“It’s okay to feel this first — then figure out my next step.”

Real Life Results

When you validate your feelings, you:

- + Lower the intensity of emotions.
- + Feel calmer and more in control.
- + Reduce stress on your body (lower cortisol, better sleep, healthier heart).
- + Build self-worth by respecting your own experience.

Breaking Patterns & Building Better Tools

Stop harmful habits and start meeting your needs in healthier ways



You Good?

Ever thought, “Why do I keep doing this?” Whether it’s doom-scrolling, overeating, yelling, or shutting down — here’s the truth: **you’re not sabotaging yourself. You’re self-soothing with the tools you have right now.**

Real Talk



Your brain is always scanning for what brings relief or reward, even if that relief only lasts a few minutes. That’s why the same unhelpful behaviors can feel impossible to break. Here’s the good news: with practice and better tools, you can retrain your brain.

The Behavior Loop (why patterns stick)

- + **Trigger:** Something stressful happens.
 - + **Behavior:** You react (snap, scroll, eat, avoid).
 - + **Relief:** You feel better... for a moment.
 - + **Repeat:** Your brain learns, “This helps,” and pushes you to do it again.
- This isn’t about willpower — it’s about wiring. And wiring can change.

Try This:

Next time you notice a pattern, keep a Habit Tracker and write it out:

Trigger: What happened?	Behavior: What did I do?	Need/Relief: What did it give me?
Got criticized at work	Scrolled on my phone for an hour	Escape, distraction
Felt lonely	Texted an ex-partner	Connection, validation
Felt overwhelmed	Yelled at partner	Control, release of pressure

Then answer this: What else could I try next time?
Ideas: take a walk, call a supportive friend, journal, deep breathing, grounding exercise.

Inner Thought

1	“I can’t stop screwing this up.”	“I’m learning the needs I’m trying to meet, and I can find a better way.”
2	“I have no self-control.”	“My brain is wired for relief, and I’m practicing healthier tools.”
3	“I’ll never change this pattern.”	“Every small change rewires my brain for the better.”

Reframe Your Brain

Real Life Results

- When you understand & rewrite your patterns, you:
- + Meet your needs without harming yourself.
 - + Show compassion instead of shame.
 - + Build new habits that actually last.

Facing Hard Truths & Connecting with Boundaries

Build resilience, set boundaries, and strengthen relationships



You Good?

Life throws curveballs. Whether it’s breakups, job losses, diagnoses, or conflict with someone you care about, our first reaction is often resistance.

Real Talk



Sometimes the truth hurts. It’s okay if you’re feeling unsettled, angry, or even numb right now. Radical acceptance doesn’t mean you have to like what’s happening — it means you stop fighting what is, so you can start healing from there.



Try This: Practice Radical Acceptance*

Radical Acceptance doesn’t mean you approve of what happened or that you’re okay with it. It means you fully acknowledge what is true right now, in this moment without judgment or denial.

When you feel stuck in resistance, walk through these steps:

- 1. **Name what happened (facts only):** “The relationship ended.”
- 2. **Name what you’re telling yourself:** “This ruined everything.”
- 3. **Practice acceptance in the present tense:** “This happened. I may not like it — but I accept that it’s real right now. I can choose my next step.”

Acceptance isn’t giving up. It’s reclaiming your energy for what comes next.

Be Curious, Not Judgemental*

Instead of labeling thoughts and feelings as good/bad, practice curiosity. Feelings aren’t facts or a moral failure. They’re signals. Your job is to notice them, understand them, and decide what to do with them — not punish yourself for having them. Mindfulness skills help create space between what’s happening and how you respond. It means you fully acknowledge what is true right now, in this moment without judgment or denial.

Judgmental Response	Non-Judgmental Reframe
“I’m pathetic for crying.”	“I’m noticing that I’m crying right now.”
“She’s so annoying.”	“I feel irritated when she interrupts me.”
“I messed up — I’m a failure.”	“I made a mistake. That happens.”

Judging creates shame and keeps us reactive. Mindfulness builds space, clarity, and self-compassion.

Real Life Results

Practicing these tools helps you:

- + Face painful realities without spiraling.
- + Reduce shame, judgment, and “stuckness.”
- + Build stronger, more honest relationships.
- + Communicate your needs with clarity & respect.

Protecting Your Peace

Build connection and boundaries with kindness.



You Good?

Ever walk away from a conversation thinking, “I was too harsh,” or “I stayed quiet and betrayed myself”? You’re not alone.* Here’s the truth: **you don’t have to choose between being liked and being respected.** With the right tools, you can do both.



Real Talk



Healthy relationships require balance: **connection + boundaries.** When conflict arises, two powerful communication tools can help you stay kind yet clear, and assertive yet respectful: **GIVE and FAST.**

Try This: Build and Maintain Relationships

Use GIVE when your goal is to nurture connection with a partner, friend, family member, or colleague.

G =

Gentle

Speak with kindness. Avoid blame, sarcasm, or threats.

Example: “I’d like to talk about something, not to attack you, but to understand each other better.”

I =

Interested

Show that you’re listening. Make eye contact, nod, ask **follow-up questions.**

Example: “Can you tell me more about how you felt in that moment?”

V =

Validate

Acknowledge the other person’s perspective, even if you disagree.

Example: “I get why that upset you. That makes sense.”

E =

Easy manner

Use a calm tone. A little warmth or humor goes a long way.

Example: “This is awkward, but I think we can get through it.”

Try This: Protect Your Self-Respect

Use FAST when your goal is to stand up for yourself without guilt or over-explaining.

F =

Fair

Be fair to yourself and the other person.

Example: “I hear your side, and I want to explain mine, too.”

A =

Apologies

Only when necessary. Don’t apologize just for existing or having needs.

Example: Say “Thanks for listening,” not “Sorry for bringing this up.”

S =

Stick to values

Don’t sacrifice your principles to avoid conflict.

Example: This doesn’t align with what I believe is right for me.”

T =

Truthful

Be honest and direct — no exaggerating or minimizing.

Example: “I’m not okay with that, and I need some space.”

Inner Thought

1 If I speak up, I’ll lose them.”

2 “I have to apologize to keep the peace.”

3 “It’s easier to stay quiet.”

Reframe Your Brain

“If I speak clearly, I give the relationship a chance to grow healthier.”

“I can be respectful without apologizing for existing.”

“Saying what I need protects me — and still shows I care.”

Real Life Results

Practicing these tools helps you:

- + Protect your peace while preserving relationships.
- + Communicate clearly without shame or guilt.
- + Build healthier, more honest connections.